

ARE YOU CONDEMNED OR CONFIDENT?

Sunday, October 10, 2021 -- 1st JOHN series -- Msg 19 -- Pastor Ben Nistor

1st John 3:18-24

English Standard Version (ESV)

18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

REVIEW:

FIRST JOHN presents multiple TESTS by which one can evaluate if they have true, saving faith.

- 1) Do you recognize your own sinfulness? (1:8-10)
- 2) Do you recognize Christ for who He is? (2:1-2)
- 3) Do you obey Christ's commands? (2:3-8)
- 4) Do you hate others? (2:9-11)
- 5) Do you love the world instead of God? (2:15-17)
- 6) Do you stay with Christ and His Church? (2:18-24)
- 7) Do you practice sin or do you practice righteousness? (3:4-10)
- 8) **LAST WEEK:** Do you love one another in deed and in truth? (3:11-18)

TWO IMPORTANT EMPHASES of 1 JOHN 3:19-24:

- 1) **John is emphasizing God's comfort for the Christian (Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, RC Sproul, John Stott)**

vs 20 Though our hearts may condemn us, God will not. (see Rom 8:1)

WHY? God is greater than our heart AND knows everything. (see Isaiah 55:6-9)

In other words, the heart is not the final arbiter of our hearts.... GOD IS. SO, let your heart rest assured. God will not judge the Christian whose heart condemns him.

John Stott (21st Century Anglican scholar/pastor who wrote *The Letters of John*):

"Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, he knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and it is implied, will be more merciful towards us than our own heart. His omniscience should relieve, not terrify, us."

2) John is emphasizing God's challenge to the unbeliever or Christian (Augustine, John Calvin, Matthew Henry, John MacArthur)
vs 20 Though our hearts condemn us, God will judge our hearts more accurately. (see Jeremiah 17:7-10; Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24)

vs 21 vs 21 is a contrast to vs 20. A heart that is free from condemnation has confidence before God.

In other words, the heart is not the final arbiter of our hearts.... GOD IS. SO, if one's conscience is not clear before God, they are failing to have belief in Jesus and love for the brothers. And if they are failing to obey, they stand condemned, not just by their own conscience, but by God.

Matthew Henry (17th century puritan pastor who wrote a 6-volume commentary on the whole Bible):
"Our heart here is our self-reflecting judicial power, by which we can take cognizance of ourselves, and accordingly pass judgment on our state towards God; and so it is the same with conscience. Conscience is God's representative, calls the court in his name, and acts for him. If conscience condemns us, God does so too. God is a greater witness than our conscience, and knows more against us than it does: he knows everything. If conscience acquits us, God does so too."

WHAT JOHN TELLS US ABOUT CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE:

Christian confidence is the boldness and courage to stand before God's presence only on the basis of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Christian confidence grows when Christians obey God's commands and love Christ and fellow believers (1 Jn 2:3, 5; 3:10, 16,19, 24; 4:2, 6, 13, 17; 5:2; see also Heidelberg Catechism Question 1 and 86).

- 1) Confidence in God allows us to know we are of the truth. (see John 18:37; 1 Jn 2:21; 4:6; 2 Jn 1:1-2, 4; Eph 1:13; 4:25; 1 Tim 2:4; 3:15)
vs 19 'by this we shall know' is future tense.
- 2) Confidence in God is a guarantee that God hears our prayers.
vs 22 God hears prayers of people who 'keep commandments' AND do 'what pleases him.'
vs 23 God hears prayers of people who believe in Jesus Christ AND who love others.
see also 1 Jn 2:28; cf. Eph 3:11-12; Hebrews 4:14-16
Our prayers can be hindered (1 Peter 3:7)
Our prayers can be ineffective (James 5:16)
Our prayers can be misguided (James 3:3)
- 3) Confidence in God assures us that we are his and he is ours.
vs 24 God gives us his Holy Spirit to confirm our union with him (see Romans 8:14-17; John 14:16, 26; 15:26)
- 4) God gives us confidence when we believe in the name of his SON.
vs 23 name, Son, Jesus Christ
- 5) God gives us confidence when we love one another.
vs 18 vs 18 is the grounds for vs 19.
vs 23 vs 23 repeats the command that John has previously stated.

KEY QUESTION:

Do you stand condemned before God? Or are you confident before God?